

**Written testimony for the Michigan Competitiveness Committee of the State House of  
Representatives**

Re: HB 4714 (Medicaid Expansion)

June 11, 2013

Chairman Shirkey and members of the committee:

My name is Bette O'Connor-Rogers and I have been a nurse for 33 years. I come before you on behalf of the 11,000 fellow members of the Michigan Nurses Association.

I know you have heard testimony from many organizations on the issue of Medicaid expansion already. Like the Governor and virtually all groups in Michigan – including ones that MNA does not always agree with – MNA supports accepting the federal expansion of Medicaid as soon as possible, with no strings attached.

Unlike the other groups who have testified, registered nurses are in a unique position to understand the everyday health care needs of Michigan citizens. We are the health care professionals who work most closely with patients. We are their direct caregivers and advocates, and we know the role that Medicaid and the lack of access to health care play in their well-being and survival.

We are here to make sure that you, our legislators, understand that Medicaid is a lifeline, pure and simple, for the vast majority of the patients we care for.

I could go on all day with stories about how Medicaid has literally saved lives, and how the lack of Medicaid has put lives at risk and vastly reduced so many individual's ability to live with dignity and reach their full potential.

Countless times, I have seen patients who do not qualify for Medicaid skip their medications so they can pay for food. Women go their entire pregnancy without prenatal care. People delay seeing a doctor so they can pay the rent and keep a roof over their families' heads.

*The Michigan Nurses Association is the state's largest and most effective union and professional association for registered nurses, representing nearly 11,000 RNs statewide and advocating for them and their patients.*



**Michigan  
Nurses  
Association**

*An Affiliate of National Nurses United*

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Patients with no resources to manage their chronic illnesses end up in the ER or worse, needing amputations or open-heart surgeries. For too many patients, the hospital, and especially the ER, is an expensive and ineffective revolving door.

Let me make this clear: registered nurses in Michigan see these kinds of situations every single day because too many Michigan residents cannot afford health care coverage. We hold our patients' hands and share their helplessness and do the best we can.

These tragedies are heartbreaking to me as a nurse. They also make me angry, especially now that there is a partial solution – the federal expansion of Medicaid. And there is NO valid reason for Michigan to turn our back on it.

Our patients are counting on YOU to accept this opportunity for them and their families to live a healthier life and prevent costly illnesses. Every Michigan citizen benefits when citizens are healthier and the financial burden on taxpayers is reduced.

Using federal dollars to expand Medicaid to Michigan residents will vastly improve the health of hundreds of thousands of our neighbors, our families, and our fellow community members.

Because the fact is, people who access health care are not invisible “others.”

They are women, children, people with disabilities, veterans, seniors, and working people in our community members. Every one of those people needs health care, and every one of us pays the price when they are denied.

The human costs of refusing to accept legitimate federal funds that will provide health care for hundreds of thousands of citizens is simply too high. I urge you all to do the right thing for a healthier Michigan.

Thank you.

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